

A
SERMON

Preached at the

ASSIZES

HELD AT

CHESTER,

September XX. 1681.

By N. STRATFORD, D.D.
and Dean of St. ASAPH.

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TO THE
Right Reverend Father in God
J O H N,
Lord Bishop of CHESTER.

MY LORD,

ome will perhaps think it
a piece of Vanity, to pre-
fix so great a Name to
so small a Thing; but
how mean soever the en-
suing Discourse may be, since it is Your
Pleasure it should be sent to the Press, it
may justly take Sanctuary in Your Lord-
ship's Patronage: For what more reason-
able, than that He should answer for
its manifold Defects, who caus'd them to
be expos'd to public Censure? I thought
indeed, that I could not, without some
appearance of Rudeness, resist the impor-
tunity of the Honourable Justices of

DEDICATION.

Assize, and other Persons of Quality, who heard it preach'd; yet I could not prevail with my self to publish it, 'till, to their Desires, Your Lordship added Your Command; and then I thought it my Duty no longer to Dispute, but forthwith to Obey. That it may be successful in promoting those important Ends at which it aims, I humbly beg Your Lordship's Blessing and Prayers for it.

And as this Church is already bless'd in Your Lordship's most Pious and Learned Labours; so that God would be farther Gracious to it, in giving Your Lordship Health and long Life to perfect those other great Works You have begun, and to add many more to them, shall be the constant Prayer of

Your Lordship's most humble

and most obedient Servant,

N. STRATFORD.

A
SERMON

Preached at the

A S S I Z E S
H E L D A T
C H E S T E R.

A C T S 24. 25.

*And as he reason'd of Righteousness,
Temperance, and Judgment to come,
Felix trembled.*

W Hich words giving us a brief
account of a Sermon preached
by St. Paul, concerning
the Faith in Christ, to Felix
the Roman Governour of Judea; in them we
B may

may observe, 1. The manner of the Apostle's preaching, *He reasoned.* 2. Those points of the Christian Faith about which he reasoned; *Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come.* 3. The Effect wrought upon *Felix*, by his reasoning upon these; *He trembled.*

1. The manner of *St. Paul's* preaching, *he reasoned*: As he did not entertain his Hearers with words and noise only, instead of sense; so neither did he Magisterially impose: But whatsoever he commended, either to their Faith or Practice; as he deliver'd it in a plain, unaffected dress of Words; so he back't it with such strength of Argument, as was sufficient not only to Court, but even to Command their assent. He knew 'twas in vain to attaque the Will and Affections, before the Understanding was subdu'd to the Faith; that while Men follow the conduct of a blind or erring Guide, 'tis not likely they should be reduced from their Wanderings; that no Man can be persuaded to abandon his Favourite Sin, till he be indeed convinced, that 'twill be an evil and a bitter thing,

thing, to hold any longer fellowship with it.

That therefore he might effectually translate Men, from the *Power of Satan*, to the *Kingdom of God*; he first endeavour'd to open their Eyes, and to turn them from Darkness to Light; to convince them, both of Sin and of Duty, by solid uncontrollable Arguments; and to give them the most forcible Dissuasives from the one, the most quickening Incentives to the other.

This was the way of preaching, that in *St. Paul's* judgment was the most powerful, and therefore the method he here used, in order to the Conversion of *Felix*. I therefore humbly crave leave in imitation of our Apostle, briefly to reason with you, concerning *Righteousness*, *Temperance*, and *Judgment to come*; by shewing what indispensable Obligations we are under, what potent Motives we have, as to the practice of the two former, so to the belief of the later. And first for *Righteousness*.

As the word is not here to be extended to our immediate duty to God, so neither shall

I confine it to that scantling of Justice, which relates to another's Estate only; but shall take it in a middle Latitude, as comprehensive of all the duty we owe to our Neighbour, whether with respect to his outward, or inward Man: Which tho it be of vast extent, yet 'tis usually reduced to two general Heads; the one Negative, to do him no manner of wrong; either in his Person, or in his Relatives, or in his Estate; or in any other Capacity: The other Positive, to render him his due; whether it be that which we owe to all Men indifferently, (as all common Offices of Humanity,) or to some in special, by virtue of that particular Relation in which we stand to them (as *Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour:*) And not only what is due by the Laws of Men (which are contracted to a narrow compass,) but by the more extensive Law of God. For the Apostle here reason'd of *Righteousness*, as 'tis a part of the faith of Christ, who hath raised our Justice as high as Charity, and made it our bounden Duty, not only
to

to do no Evil, but as we have opportunity to do Good to all Men; to feed the Hungry, and cloath the Naked; to give Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lame. And that not meerly out of private Designs, and sordid Motives; but from a suitable affection and inclination of Will; which is that alone by which all our outward acts of Righteousness are animated, and render'd genuine and acceptable to God.

This being the Sum of the *Righteousness* here meant, how easie a matter is it to *reason* about it? To demonstrate, that it is not only highly becoming us, but our necessary Duty; and that, both as we are Men, and as we are Christians. For first, this is no more, than *to do as we would be done to*; a Law which Nature it self teaches us. Were it a Duty far from us; were we to ascend to Heaven, to bring it down from above; or to descend into the Deep, to fetch it up from beneath; were we to toil and perplex our Brains, either in lofty, or profound enquiries, to find it out; we might then perhaps be excused in our neglect of it: But when it is not only nigh us, but within
us,

us, that we need look no farther than our own Breasts to find our obligation to it; what Apology can we make for our selves, in case we be found Transgressors?

'Tis true, (*Whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them*) we find among the injunctions of our Blessed Saviour; not for that it was not a Law of a more ancient date, but either because it was somewhat sullied by the long growing wickedness of the World; or because Men were generally so bias'd by their corrupt Affections, that they were not willing to take notice of it; he therefore reprinted it in so fair a Character, that he that runs may read it: For certain it is, that as it was at first impress'd upon our Nature, so it was never so totally defac'd, but that a mere natural Man, by a considerate reflexion upon himself, might easily read it: Witness *Aristotle*, *Isocrates*, and many more, conducted only by the light of Reason, who own'd themselves oblig'd to the observation of it, before the Laws of Christ were publish'd to the World. Yea, so indelibly is it engraven in our Consciences, that those who

*Diog. Laert.
l. 5. in vita
Aristot.
Isocrat. Orat.
ad Demon.*

who live in a constant defiance to it, are not able to expunge it; for however they transgress it in their dealing with others, yet when their own Rights are concern'd, they always expect, that others should observe it toward themselves. Let us now reflect, and commune a while with our own Hearts.

Are we willing to be wrong'd our selves? Are we content to fall a Sacrifice to another Man's Revenge or Ambition? Do we desire to be trampled in the Dirt, by those that are greater and stronger than we are? Would we be fraudulently circumvented in our Contracts? Would we be blacken'd by false defamatory Reports? Would we take it well to have our innocent Words and Actions wrested to a mischievous construction? In a word; would we have our own Rights in any kind invaded by others? If not, with what face can we assault the Body, or undermine the Estate, or either openly or secretly wound the Reputation of our Neighbour? With what reason can we take that Liberty to our selves, which we deny to others, who may lay as good

a claim to it as we can? As if we our selves only were free from all Duty to others, and all others in Bonds to us. Nor are we more tyed to Justice by the Law of our Nature, than we are, 2. By our Interest, which, if rightly understood, is a Law too.

'Tis but reason that that should most sway us, which, all things consider'd, is most beneficial to us; now would we contrive our own advantage, how can we do it more effectually, than by an exact observation of the Rules of Righteousness? That we are hereby rais'd to a conformity to God himself, whose Image mainly consists in Righteousness, and true Holiness; and that by the contrary we degenerate, not only into Beasts of Prey, but become like the very Devil, who was a Cheater, a Lyar, and a Murderer from the beginning, will, I suppose, be deny'd by none. And doubtless, so much the more happy we shall be, by how much the more we resemble the most blessed Being; so much the more miserable, by how much the nearer we approach to the most accursed.

But

But in case we are sunk so far below our Original selves, have so much forgotten our Divine Extraction, as to place our happiness in the poor, little, sensual enjoyments of this World; yet nothing certainly is more highly conducive thereunto, than the exercise of Justice.

Were we in the *Leviathan* state of Nature, in which every Man's hand would be against every Man; should one Man blow up our Credits, another seize upon our Estates, a third make an assault upon our Lives; how calamitous and deplorable would our condition be! And yet there is no Man that offers these, or any other injury to another, but he thereby provokes and invites another to do the like to himself. For what reason have we to expect, that others should not mete that measure to us, that we have meted to them before?

'Tis true; we should *do to others*, not as they do, but *as we would* (were we in their circumstances) *they should do to us*: But the daily practice of the World assures us, That the generality of Mankind make our dealing with them the Standard of their

carriage towards us again. And therefore when we injure our Neighbours, we do in effect but wrong our selves, because the wrong we do to them, 'tis likely they will return into our own Bosoms : And on the contrary, by every good office we do to others, we engage them to do the like to us ; and in case they be persons but of an ordinary Ingenuity, they will not fail as they have opportunity, to recompense us.

But besides the obligation this lays upon others, to requite us in the same kind ; 'tis a thing in it self highly venerable and amiable, that makes a Man's face to shine, and commends him to the Esteem of his greatest Enemies.

Prov. 14. 34. I might also shew, how *Righteousness* exalteth a Nation, (in the prosperity of which, the welfare of every private person is bound up) how Societies are firmly cemented and establish'd by it ; and by the contrary, would soon be broken into pieces, and sink into dissolution.

But I pass to a third Consideration ; namely, the near Relation we stand in one to another. 'Twas in *Moses's* account a good

good Argument; *Sirs, ye are Brethren, why do ye wrong one to another?* Which also the Prophet *Malachi* urged to the same purpose: *Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why then do we deal treacherously every Man against his Brother?* And St. Paul thought us sufficiently obliged to speak the truth every one to his Neighbour, because we are Members one of another. The Learned and the Ignorant, the Rich and the Poor, the Base and the Honourable, they are all of the same ancient Family, derive their Pedigree from the same common Parents. What tho one be a younger, another an elder Brother? Tho one hath a more liberal, another a more scant Portion of this World's Goods? Yet should we not still remember that we are Brethren, and be mutually serviceable to each other's good? *Acts 7. Mal. 2. 10. Eph. 4. 26.*

Nor are we more closely tied together by Nature, than we are by Religion: As Christians we are all Members of one Body, are all animated by one Spirit, and call'd in one hope of our Calling. And for those who are so many ways one and the same,

both by Nature and Religion, is it not as monstrous for them to be injurious one to another, as 'tis for a Man to be cruel to himself, and to hate his own Flesh?

But if these Reasons should be of little force with any Man, there is one Argument still behind, that will undoubtedly be prevalent with all those, who are not so absurd, as plainly to contradict their Profession by their Practice.

For fourthly, What doth the Lord in his written Word more expressly require, more vehemently inculcate, than to *do justly*, and *love Mercy*? These things he accounts, not the Lighter, but the Weightier Matters of his Law, and sets so high a value upon them, that he values nothing where these are wanting. And tho the *Jews* were generally so disingenuous and ill-natur'd, that God in some Cases, meerly for the hardness of their Hearts, made them some Allowances; yet he expressly forbad them, not only to Hurt, but also to Hate, or so much as bear a Grudge against their Brother. And can we in reason think, that our Blessed Saviour, who came not to Evacuate the Law, but to Fulfill it; who

Micah 6. 9.

Isa. 1. 17, 18.

Mat. 23. 23.

Levit. 19.

17, 18.

who expects, that all his Disciples should, by their exemplary Virtues, become the Salt of the Earth, and the Lights of the World; and in order thereunto, hath more fully reveal'd our Duty, and *brought Life and Immortality to light*, the more powerfully to engage us to the performance of it; can we, I say, think, that he made us any Abatements?

If we will but impartially consult his Sermon in the Mount, we shall soon be resolv'd in this Matter: We shall there find, that he hath laid his Prohibition against the Murder of the Tongue, and of the Heart, as well as of the Hand; that rather than knowingly to Do, he hath commanded us patiently to Suffer an Injury; and instead of returning *evil for evil*, that on the contrary, we *recompence evil with good*. And because, if there be any persons in the World that we may be allow'd to do a mischief to, they may well be suppos'd to be those, who, for Christ's sake, are our Enemies, and therefore His Enemies more than Ours; so far is our Saviour from giving us a License, to do the least Hurt to such as these, that he peremptorily

torily commands us, to return them all manner of Good, for all manner of Evil:
Mat. 5. 44. To bless them that curse us; to do good to them that hate us; and to pray for them, who (for his sake) despitefully use us, and persecute us.

And that he might effectually oblige us to the observation of these his Laws, he transcrib'd them to the Life in his own Practice. As while he lived, he continually went about doing Good to an ungrateful World, and at last, freely gave his Life for those who with violent hands took it away; so together with his Blood, he also pour'd out his Heart, in an ardent Prayer to his
Luke 22. 34. Father to forgive them.

This is the Example we profess to follow, and these are the Precepts we pretend to obey; yea, which we have solemnly vow'd to conform to. And if we are tied by such strong Bonds, to be kind and courteous, and good and gracious, and that to those, who (if any Men in the World) deserve the quite contrary from us; how much more to be just and honest, that is, as good as Turks and Heathens?

I know no greater obligations we can have to any Duty, than these already mentioned; if we are able to break these Bonds, none will be found strong enough to hold us.

I therefore proceed to the second part of St. Paul's Sermon, namely, *Temperance*. This contains our Duty to our selves, as the former, that we owe to our Neighbour. The word in the Original denotes Power ^{'Ενεσθια} and Dominion over a Man's self; and tho it may be extended to a due command of all our inordinate Affections and Appetites, of what kind soever, yet 'tis here to be limited to the Government of those especially, to the Tyranny of which, *Felix* was most enslav'd; that is, to the Lusts of the Flesh, as they are distinguish'd by St. John, from *the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*. And therefore I see no necessity of mending our Translation, if we take Temperance as comprehensive both of Sobriety and Chastity; as giving Laws to all our exorbitant fleshly Lusts, and bringing them into subjection to the Empire of Reason and Religion.

Now

Now so apparently reasonable is this Duty, that there is no Man so bruitish, who may not easily reason himself into a sence of his obligation to it: For whether we consider our Body, Soul, or Spirit; whether we consult our Sense, our Reason, or our Religion; we shall be furnished with store of Arguments to oblige, and of Motives to induce us to the practice of it.

First, Our very Flesh it self (which alone rebels against it) were it capable of reasoning, would become its Advocate. Tho the sensitive Appetite be absolutely necessary to the well being of the Body; yet when it once swells too big, and stretches beyond those Bounds that Nature hath assign'd it, nothing is more destructive to the Parent that breeds it; and nothing more highly advantageous, both to the health and pleasure of the Flesh, than to retrench the Extravagancies of its own Appetites.

For, 1. Indulgence to Sensuality is a most deadly Enemy to our bodily Health, without which, the Flesh must needs be very ill at ease. The Glutton swallows a Disease in every intemperate Morfel; and the Wan-

Wanton fills his Bones with Rottenness, as fast as he empties them of Marrow; and by every sort of Intemperance, the Sensualist either begets, or nurses up some Viper, that will prey upon, and devour his beloved Flesh. 'T would be endless to descend to particulars: In general, such numerous Armies of Diseases are raised and maintained by this Vice alone, as are able to overthrow the strongest Constitution in the World. And therefore *Diogenes* deservedly laugh'd at those Sots, who took care to be Embalm'd after they were dead; and in the mean time, did their endeavour to stink and rot while they were alive.

2. Moderation of our fleshly Appetites; 'tis a great advantage to the Pleasures of the Flesh; it gives them a higher and more generous Taste, and makes them much more Delicious, than otherwise they would be: For by restraint our Appetites are quicken'd, our Perceptions are render'd more clear and brisk; and by how much the keener our Senses are, by so much the more is the Pleasure heighten'd. Whereas the *Prov. 27. 7.*
full Soul loatheth the Honey-Comb, to the hungry
D Soul

Soul every bitter thing is sweet ; a Crust of dry Bread , and a Sup of cold Water , when sawc'd with Hunger and Thirst , are more delicious than the Banquets of Cleopatra , to a gorg'd Stomach.

For when the Appetite is let loose, 'tis soon tired by its own Extravagancy ; 'tis cloy'd and glutted by immoderate Enjoyment ; and then the most exquisite Entertainments of Lust become not only Unfavoury, but Fulsom. So foolish and sottish is the Voluptuous ; for Pleasure's sake he abandons the greater, and pursues the less ; he forsakes a Fountain of living Water, and runs to a dirty Puddle to quench his Thirst.

And if Intemperance be so great an Enemy to the Body, then certainly much more, In the second place, doth it War against the Spirit ; to the nature, working, and improvement of which, nothing in the World can be more directly opposite. It darkens the Mind, and enslaves the Will ; it dethrones Reason, and exalts Passion ; it softens, debases, and impoverishes the Spirit, and renders us wholly unfit for manly Undertakings ; it throws down all our Defences,
and

and exposes us naked to all the Mischiefs, that a benighted Understanding, an ungovernable Appetite, and unbridled Passions can betray us to. *Whoredom and Wine, and Hos. 4. 11. new Wine* (saith the Prophet) *take away the Heart*; and in Solomon's reckoning, a Drunkard is as stupid, as one that *lies down on the top of a Mast.* In a word, Intemperance quite stifles the Breath of God within us, and transforms us, not only into Beasts, but into something far worse.

In case therefore we have any regard to the well-being, either of our Bodies, or of our Souls here in this World; if we would shew our selves Men, do any thing becoming the Dignity of our Nature, we need no greater Motives to induce us to live soberly.

And yet, 3. By the pure Religion, and undefil'd, which we all profess, we are more strongly oblig'd to *cleanse our selves from all filthiness of the Flesh, as well as of the Spirit*; and that not only by virtue of its Precepts, but of its Promises. *1 Cor. 7. 1.*

First, By virtue of its Precepts. As our Blessed Saviour himself chose such an un-

easie condition of Life, and exposed himself to such a painful Death, as were a perfect Contradiction to all sensual Gratifications; so he requires, that all those who call themselves by his Name, should so far transcribe the Copy he hath set them, as to *make no provision for the Flesh, to fulfill the Lusts thereof*: And therefore he hath not only caution'd us against *Surfeiting and Drunkenness*, (the grosser acts of Intemperance) but hath assur'd us, that he will own none for his
Rom. 13. 14. *Votaries, who do not crucifie the Flesh, together with its Affections and Lusts.* Nor will it suffice, if after we have once nail'd them to the Cross, we let them loose again, and suffer them to recover of their Wounds; but we must rack and torture them, even to Death: For we are commanded to *mortifie our Members which are on the Earth; Fornication, Uncleanness, Passion, evil Concupiscence, and inordinate Affection.* Yea, be they Members as dearly beloved, and such as seem as necessary and advantagious to us as our right Eye, or our right Hand; we must without remorse pluck them out, and cut them off, and cast them away from us with abhorrency.
 Nor

Nor are we more strongly oblig'd to this by the Precepts of our Religion, than we are, In the second place, by its *exceeding great and precious Promises*, which are given us to this very end, *That by them we may be made* 2 Pet. 1. 4. *partakers of a Divine Nature, having escaped the Pollution that is in the World through Lust.* For as these Promises are all made to those only, who through the Spirit do mortifie the Deeds of the Body; so the good things promised are of such a refin'd and spiritual Nature, that no others are capable of enjoying them. For put the case, that God should lay open the Enclosure, and give free leave to a Sensualist to enter into the Regions of immortal Bliss; yet a person of such a brutish Temper, would be as indisposed to relish the Entertainment there, as a Goat is to tast the Pleasures of Music. For there is not any thing in Heaven that is suitable to the desires of a carnal Man; there is not so much as *eating or drinking*; there is no *marrying, nor giving in Marriage*; much less any intemperate Cups, or unclean Embraces, to entertain the Voluptuary with. Such are the Joys above, as mainly consist
in.

in the Vision of God ; and how can he take any pleasure in God, who can behold nothing in him, but what is as opposite to his own Inclinations , as Light to Darknes? No, the presence of the infinitely blessed Being would fill such a Soul with Confusion and Horrour, and make him almost as much deprecate the being in Heaven, as in Hell.

If therefore we have any love to our selves ; if we desire to be happy, either in the Life that now is, or in that which is to come; instead of pampering our fleshly Lusts, we shall rather starve them, and hold them in as with Bit and Bridle, till they become tame and tractable, and humble Servants to our Souls.

But if we are so far bewitch'd with Sensuality, as not to be disenchant'd by such calm and gentle Reasoning, 'tis high time to proceed to that which is more loud and thundering, namely, *The Judgment to come*, the third and last part of the Apostle's Sermon. That the Doctrine of a Judgment to come is no cunningly devis'd Fable, we may be undoubtedly assur'd, (if we can be
so

so of any thing) and that both by Reason and Revelation.

For First, We find it impress'd by God himself upon our Minds.

Secondly, It necessarily results from the natural Notion we have of God

And Thirdly, We are infallibly assur'd of it by Divine Revelation.

First, The Doctrine of a future Judgment is by God himself impress'd upon our Minds, and therefore hath been ever own'd, even by those persons, who had no other Teacher than themselves. 'Tis needless to give a particular account of those Heathen Writers, who have given their Attestation to this Article of our Faith: He that will not be at the pains to peruse the Authors themselves, may find many of their Testimonies collected, by St. Clemens of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, Eusebius, and others. And that this Notion derives its Pedigree from God himself, who can have no design to cheat and abuse us, will easily appear by these Considerations.

1. Because it is not the product of Institution only; for if it were, how came it

Clem. Alex. Stromat. l. 5. p. 606.
Just. Mart. de Monarch. Dei, & Paran. ad Grec. Euseb. de Preparat. Evang. l. 11. c. 38. l. 12. c. 6.

to

to pass, that the most rude and uninstructed Nations in the World have been ever possess'd with it? That the barbarous *Indians*, and the salvage *Americans*, had a prenotion of Rewards and Punishments in another World, we cannot so much as question, unless we will be so unreasonable, as to call in question the Truth of the most credible Histories. Besides, if the conceit of a Judgment to come proceeded from hence, there must be some Man who first broach'd it: And by whom was he taught, who first taught it to others? And if it took not its Original from Institution, 'twill yet appear more highly credible, that 'tis by the God of Nature interwoven with the very Essence of our Souls; in that,

2. Those persons are possess'd with a Fear of this Judgment, who can have no ground of Fear, but what they find in themselves. Whence is it, that they who commit Villanies in the Dark; or in the solitary Wilderness, without any Witness but God and their own Consciences, cannot reflect upon their Sins without Fear and Regret? They are in no danger of any earthly Tribunal; what then

then can they dread but the Judgment of Heaven? Whence is it, that those persons, whose very name is a Terrour to evil doers, in case they themselves do evil, do often become a Terrour to themselves? Whom do they fear? To whom are they accountable? But to him only who is higher than the Highest, who will judge the Great and the Small, the Strong and the Weak, without respect of Persons.

Which is yet, In the third place, more strongly concluded; Because many persons, who do their utmost to stupifie and debauch their Consciences, are by no means able to rid themselves of this troublesome Guest; which certainly they would be, were it not connatural to them.

Many there are who set their Mouth against Heaven, and their Tongue walketh through the Earth; who set themselves down in the Chair of the Scorners; who droll upon Religion, and make a mock at Sin, and laugh aloud at a Judgment to come, and proclaim them all for Fools or Knaves, who endeavour to possess Men with a firm, steadfast, practical Belief of these things.

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And

And yet these jolly Men cannot get an absolute Conquest over their own Consciences; but maugre all the Violence they offer to them, and the strongest Bands of Iniquity they can bind them with, they sometimes break loose, and hale them to the Bar, and pronounce that Sentence against them here, that shall hereafter be pronounc'd by Christ himself in the General Assembly of the whole World.

From all which it plainly appears, That the Notion of a Judgment to come, is not the product of Superstition or Credulity, of a feminine Understanding, or an abus'd Phancy; but so deeply impress'd by God himself upon our Minds, that nothing is able to erase it.

Secondly, A future Judgment is necessarily concluded, from the natural Notion we have of God. That God is a Being absolutely perfect, there is no Man but by the exercise of his rational Faculties, may soon attain to the knowledge of; and by necessary consequence, that he is neither ignorant, nor impotent, nor unjust, nor unmerciful; but so infinitely Knowing, that all Sins, how
secret

secret soever or disguis'd, are naked and open to his Eyes; so Powerful, that the most potent Sinner is not able to stay his Hand; so Holy, Just, and Good, that he cannot but discountenance Vice, and encourage Virtue, and will some time or other render to every Man according to his Works. All this is no more than what the very Notion of God includes: And yet, where can the Man be found, that is so quick sighted, as to be able to observe such a Dispensation of Recompences in this World, as bears any Proportion to this Idea?

'Tis true indeed, there is no Age, but affords some such remarkable Examples of God's Justice, as (if duly consider'd) would give check to the boldest Sinners: But these are comparatively rare; where one is branded with a mark of Divine Vengeance, how many Hundreds escape untouch'd? According to the common course of Providence, *There is one reward to the Righteous, and to the Wicked; to the Clean, and to the Unclean.* Yea, do we not sometimes see the Wicked lift up their Horn on high, while the Righteous hang down their Heads? *Folly set in great*

Ecc. 9. 1, 2.

Ecc. 10. 6, 7.

Dignity, and the Rich sit in low Place? Servants riding on Horses, and Princes walking as Servants on the Earth? The best of Kings brought to a Scaffold, and the worst of Rebels advanced to his Throne? And such unequal Administration of Affairs, as seems so absurd and preposterous to common Reason, can we think it the ultimate result of infinite Wisdom, and Power, and Justice? Are we not hence forc'd to conclude, that there shall be another day, in which all that is now crooked, shall be made strait; and all that is rough, shall be made plain? when the Righteous shall lift up their Heads with joy, and

Wisd. 5. 3, 4. the Wicked (who now account their Life madness, and their End to be without honour) shall be

Psal. 58. 11. forc'd with Anguish to confess; Verily, there is a Reward for the Righteous; doubtless there is a God that judgeth in the Earth.

But, Thirdly, We have yet a more sure word of Revelation, which expressly tells

Acts 17. 31. us, That God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the World in Righteousness. That we

2 Cor. 5. 10. must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done; whether it be

be good or bad : That in order to this, the Lord ^{1 Thes. 4.} himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, ^{16.} with the voice of the Archangel, and the Trumpet of God ; That all that are in the Graves shall ^{John 5. 27,} bear his Voice, and shall come forth ; they that ^{28.} have done Good, to the Resurrection of Life ; and they that have done Evil, to the Resurrection of Damnation.

Knowing therefore this Terrour of the Lord, let us be persuaded to walk honestly, as in the day ; not in Rioting and Drunkenness ; not in Chambering and Wantonness ; not in Strife and Envyng ; but to put on the Lord Jesus Christ : That so this great Day of the Lord, that will be a day of Fire and Brimstone, of Storm and Tempest, to all such as walk after the Flesh, may be a day of Jubilees, and of Triumphs to us. And that we may be indeed persuaded to this, I shall briefly represent the Terrours and Amaze-ments, wherewith all unrighteous and debauch'd Persons will then be seiz'd.

Let us imagine, that we now heard the voice of the Archangel ; *Arise ye Dead, and come to Judgment* : That we thereupon started out of our Graves, and found the whole
Earth

Earth on Fire about us, and heard the fearful Thunders, and dismal Groans, of the dissolving World: That we saw the Judge upon the Throne of his Glory, attended with Millions of the glittering heavenly Host: That we saw vast Armies arising out of the Sea, and Death and Hell delivering up the Dead that were in them: That the Books were then open'd, and all the hidden things of Darkness brought to Light, the most secret Sins made manifest.

With what confusion of face (think you) would the Deceiver, the Hypocrite, appear before the Righteous and All-seeing Judge? He that can now put a fair Face upon the foulest Matter; that can dress up Schism and Faction in the Garments of Peace and Unity, and transform Sedition and Rebellion into Loyalty and Obedience; how will he be cover'd with Shame and Blushing, when the Mask shall be pull'd off, and all that Paint and Daub wash'd away, by which he Smooth'd, and put a Gloss upon his most

*Ubi se tunc
impii vide-
bunt? Ubi
adulteri, ubi
ebriosi, ubi
maledici se
recognos-
cent? Ubi
amatores
luxuria, ubi
raptores,
ubi superbi
& invidi
apparebunt?
Quid infeli-
ces pro sua
defensione
dicturi sunt, quos totiens admonitos, & tamen imparatos dies ille repperit?
Cum ad illam Archangeli tubam omni buccina clariorem, totus simul caperet
mugire mundus, &c. Aug. de Tempore, Serm. 54.*

wrink.

wrinkled and deformed Actions? He that now thinks it a fine thing to over-reach his Brother, that decoys him into an evil Net, and then braves himself as a Man of Wit and Parts for so doing? How will he be at his Wits ends, when too late he shall be convinc'd, with a Vengeance, that Honesty was the best Policy, and that he was a wise Man, who chose to part with his own, rather than usurp another Man's Rights? He that is now Mighty to drink Wine, and a Man of Strength to pour down Strong Drink, who leaves Trophies of his Victories at every drunken Meeting; how will his Courage be cool'd, and his Crest fall? How will he sneak into a Den to hide his guilty Head, when all his Rioting and Revelling, and Swaggering, and Swearing, and Ribaldry, (for which he was here hugg'd and applauded by his dear Companions) shall be expos'd naked, in all their Shame and Turpitude, to the view of all the holy Angels, and of all the good and wise Men that ever liv'd? And when after their Sins have been made bare, and held up to the view of all the World, that dreadful

ful Sentence shall thunder in their Ears; Depart from me ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels: What inexpressible Horrors and Agonies will then possess them? Methinks I hear their despairing Cry. What! is this the end of my fleshly and worldly Lusts? Is this that for which I have taken so much Pains, and spent so much Time? Have I so often resisted the Holy Ghost, and offer'd Violence to my own Conscience, to bring my self to this woful State? Prodigious Sot! had I done and suffer'd but half so much in mortifying my sinful Lusts, as I did in gratifying them, I had now been crown'd with an exceeding and eternal weight of Glory. But alas! 'tis now too late; the date of Mercy is out, and the day of Vengeance is come; the fatal Sentence is already past, that will never be revok'd; the Judge is now inexorable, no Prayers nor Tears, no Sighs nor Groans, will move him to Pity; nothing remains for me but Torments great and intolerable, without End, without Intermision, without the allay of one Glimpse of Hope. And who can dwell with devouring Fire?

*Magna est
ejus severi-
tas post Ju-
dicium, cuius
ante Judi-
cium ineffa-
bilis miseri-
cordia pro-
rogata est.
Aug. de Verb.
Dom. in
Evang. se-
cund. Matth.
Serm. 22.*

Fire? Who can dwell with everlasting Burnings? Ob! 'tis a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God! So fearful, that the very pre-apprehensions of it is enough to make the sturdiest Sinner to tremble; which was the effect wrought upon *Felix* by St. Paul's reasoning: The third and last thing considerable in the Text.

That *Felix* was as strongly fortifi'd against the Assaults of Conscience as most Men in the World, we shall have no reason to doubt, if we read the Character given of him by *Josephus* and *Tacitus*; and yet being conscious to himself of a wicked Life, the Voice of a poor despised Prisoner citing him to a Judgment to come; sets him a Trembling.

Joseph. Antiqu. Jud. l. 20. c. 6. Tacit. Annal. 12. 11. Hist. 5. 3.

By which we plainly see, that the Arrows of an evil Conscience are so piercing, that there is no Armour of Proof against them; that its Assaults and Batteries are so strong and violent, that no Bulwark is able to withstand them: But be the Sinner never so Great and Powerful, never so Daring and Resolute; yet *Wickedness* being condemned by its own Witness, will be very timo-

rons; and being press'd with Conscience, will always forecast Grievous Things: Witness the most Potent, and the most Insolent Sinners that ever were; such as *Tiberius*, *Caligula* and *Nero*, in Heathen Story; besides *Cain*, *Belshazzar*, and others, recorded in Holy Scripture.

What then remains, but that forthwith we reconcile our selves to our own Consciences? That when they deal faithfully with us, and tell us roundly of our Sins, and of the Judgment to come, for them; we do not rudely shuffle them off (as *Felix* did *St. Paul*) to a more convenient Season; that we no longer stifle our Convictions, and check our Tremblings, but suffer them to proceed to a sincere Conversion; not only to the shaking of our vicious Habits, but to the tearing them all up by the Roots, and utterly destroying them; that whatsoever we have done amiss heretofore, we do so no more: But for the future denying all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, that we live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly, in this present World: That so when we shall be Summon'd to appear before the Judge of all the Earth, being first
ac-

acquitted by our own Consciences, we may also be absolv'd by the Judge, and may be advanc'd to an *Inheritance incorruptible, and undefil'd, and that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for all those, who, by patient continuance in well-doing, do seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality*: Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, for the Merits of our Blessed Saviour; to whom be ascrib'd, &c.

F I N I S.
